

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAMAKO 2293

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, XJ, ML
SUBJ: MALIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS - THE MALIAN VIEW

1. WESTERN AMBASSADOR WHO CALLED RECENTLY ON MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY GENERAL SEYDOU TRAORE, ON INSTRUCTIONS, TO SEEK THE GOVERNMENT OF MALI'S VIEWS ON ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT.

2. TRAORE BEGAN BY POINTING OUT THAT MALIAN EXTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS WERE BASED ON ITS ENCLAVE POSITION SINCE MALI WAS SURROUNDED BY SEVEN NEIGHBORING STATES. MALI'S INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS WERE CAUSED BY THE DOMINATION OF FOREIGN, NOT MALIAN, IDEAS WITHIN THE COUNTRY. AT INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 FRANCE HAD OFFERED MILITARY AID TO NEIGHBORING STATES, BUT NOT TO MALI. MALI THEREFORE ASKED OTHERS FOR HELP. THE USSR AND THE UNITED STATES RE-

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SPONDED WITH AID, BUT THE RUSSIANS WERE MORE GENEROUS AND MORE RELIABLE.

3. THE WEST SHOULD NOT, SAID TRAORE, SEE AFRICA IN EAST-WEST TERMS. DEFENSE MINISTER DOUKARA, FOR EXAMPLE, SPENT MORE TIME IN WESTERN COUNTRIES THAN HE DID IN THE SOVIET UNION. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE WEST RELY MORE ON MALIAN INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT

AND ON THE MALIAN PERSONALITY. AFRICANS UNDERSTAND THAT SOVIET UNION HAS ITS OWN AIMS IN AFRICA, BUT AFRICANS WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SOVIETS BECAUSE ONLY THEY OFFER ASSISTANCE TO ACHIEVE TRUE INDEPENDENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THE EUROPEANS STILL HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD IMPORTANCE AFRICANS PLACE ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEM. WESTERN COUNTRIES DO NOT REALLY WANT TOTAL INDEPENDENCE IN AFRICA; THEY STILL SUPPORT VORSTER. THE SOVIETS ARE DOING MUCH MORE. THEY PROVIDE AID AND ARMS WITHOUT STRINGS. THE SOVIETS, SAID TRAORE, HAVE A GOOD OVER-ALL RECORD IN AFRICA. THEY HAVE RECOVERED FROM THEIR EARLY MISTAKES, HAVE THOUGHT THE ISSUES THROUGH CAREFULLY AND HAVE COME OUT UNEQUIVOCALLY FOR MAJORITY RULE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING WHILE THE WEST STILL HASNOT GRASPED THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.

4. THE RESULT OF THE CORRECTNESS IN SOVIET POLICY IN AFRICA, SAID TRAORE, IS THAT THE WEST IS LOSING INFLUENCE. EACH AFRICAN COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN INTERESTS. THEY SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS BEING IN ONE CAMP OR THE OTHER. SOMALIA IS A CASE IN POINT. THE WEST SHOULD HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES. DESPITE MASSIVE SOVIET AID, MOGADISCIO HAS SHOWN IT WILL ACT IN ITS OWN INTERESTS, REGARDLESS OF THE RUSSIANS.

5. REGARDING ETHIOPIA, TRAORE SAID IT NOW RESEMBLED THE FRENCH AND SOVIET REVOLUTIONS. EACH HAD HAD ITS "PURIFICATION" PHASE. IT WAS REGRETTABLE, BUT MALI WOULD LEAVE THE ETHIOPIAN PROBLEM ALONE.

6. TRAORE SAID THAT EACH AFRICAN COUNTRY HAS THE RIGHT TO OPTIONS,
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TO MAKE CHOICES AS TO ITS POLICY. THE GROWING MOVEMENT IN AFRICA FOR MORE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE HARMONIZES WITH SOVIET POLICY. TRAORE REJECTED, HOWEVER, THE IDEA THAT SOVIET INFLUENCE WAS THEREBY INCREASING. THE WEST WAS SIMPLY "BACKWARD" IN ITS AFRICAN POLICY. THE SOVIETS WERE MORE ADVANCED.

7. IN DISCUSSING MALIAN ARMY, TRAORE SAID ITS ARMAMENT WAS DEFENSIVE. THE EASTERN COUNTRIES HAD SUPPLIED MOST OF MALI'S MILITARY EQUIPMENT BECAUSE THE WEST HAD REFUSED. THE SOVIETS HAD SIMPLY FILLED A VOID.

8. COMMENT: A FORMER AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON AND REGARDED BY THE BAMAKO DIPLOMATIC CORPS AS A REASONABLE "MAN OF THE WEST", IN CONTRAST TO OTHER MALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, SEYDOU TRAORE WAS PROBABLY TRYING TO GAIN INCREASED WESTERN ACTION IN THE SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. HIS REMARKS UNDERSCORE THE IMPORTANCE THAT THE MALIAN LEADERSHIP PUTS ON MAJORITY RULE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND ITS GROWING SKEPTICISM THAT A PEACEFUL TRANSITION IN ZIMBABWS,

NAMIBIA OR SOUTH AFRICA IS POSSIBLE.

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